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C O N F I D E N T I A L VATICAN 000326

SIPDIS

EUR/WE (MENNUTI), NEA/IAI (SELDOWITZ)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/22/2012

TAGS: IS PREL VT MEPP

SUBJECT: PRESSING VATICAN ON PALESTINIAN VIOLENCE

REF: A. A) STATE 6165 B) FROWICK/MENNUTI/SELDOWITZ

EMAILS 1/18/02

1B. C) MERANTE/SILBERMAN EMAIL 1/18/02 D) STATE 3410

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR JIM NICHOLSON, REASON E.O. 12958 1.5 (B,D)

¶1. (C) AMBASSADOR TOOK ADVANTAGE OF A FRIDAY, 01/18 MEETING WITH VATICAN FM EQUIVALENT JEAN-LOUIS TAURAN TO PRESS REFTEL
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POINTS ON THE ZINNI MISSION AND TO ASK TAURAN TO REQUEST PRESIDENT ARAFAT TO HALT THE VIOLENCE AND TAKE STEPS TO PROSECUTE THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KARINE A WEAPONS SHIPMENT. TAURAN, WHO IN THE PAST HAS BEEN AN ACTIVE PROONENT OF THE HOLY SEE'S "TILT" TOWARD THE PALESTINIANS AND OF VATICAN INTERESTS IN PROTECTING THE HOLY SITES IN JERUSALEM, TOOK THE POINTS ON BOARD, SAYING ARAFAT "WILL HEAR FROM US." TAURAN ASKED THE AMBASSADOR WHETHER HE PERSONALLY KNEW GEN. ZINNI. (NOTE: WE TAKE ALL THIS TO MEAN A) THAT SOMEONE IN THE VATICAN WILL SPEAK DIRECTLY EITHER TO ARAFAT OR TO ONE OF HIS PEOPLE AND B) THE VATICAN WOULD BE INTERESTED IN MEETING WITH GEN. ZINNI).

¶2. (U) IN THE MEANTIME, AT HIS WEEKLY ANGELUS MESSAGE THE POPE REFERRED TO THE "DEAD END" INTO WHICH THE CONFLICTING PARTIES HAVE FOUGHT THEMSELVES AND CALLED FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY NOT TO ABANDON THEM TO THEIR FATE. THIS FALLS ON THE HEELS OF HIS ANNUAL ADDRESS TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS IN WHICH HE DEFENDED ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO SECURITY WHILE DECRYING THE "FIFTY YEARS OF OPPRESSION" WHICH THE PALESTINIANS HAVE SUFFERED.

¶3. (C) ON A SOMEWHAT RELATED ISSUE, THE EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE HOLY SEE, FAROUK RAAFAT, DROPPED IN TO SEE THE AMBASSADOR FRIDAY. RAAFAT ASKED IF THE USG WAR ON TERRORISM WOULD TURN NEXT TO IRAQ. HIS DCM MET SEPARATELY ON THE SAME ISSUE WITH EMBASSY VATICAN DCM THE DAY BEFORE. BOTH PRESSED FOR THE USG TO TAKE IT SLOW ON IRAQ -- AND SEE WHETHER WE COULD "WAIT SADAAM OUT."

¶4. (C) COMMENT: CLEARLY THE VATICAN WILL SEEK TO DEFEND ITS
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OWN INTERESTS IN THE ISRAEL/PALESTINIAN CONFLICT (THE RIGHTS OF CHRISTIANS ABOVE ALL). BUT A FUNDAMENTAL VATICAN INTEREST IS SEEING AN END TO THE VIOLENCE COMMITTED AGAINST BOTH SIDES. WITH THAT IN MIND WE REQUEST DEPARTMENT CONSIDER A ZINNI DROP BY DURING ONE OF HIS FUTURE VISITS TO THE REGION. WE BELIEVE THE POPE WOULD WISH TO SPEAK TO HIM DIRECTLY ABOUT POSSIBLE PATHS TO PEACE. ON IRAQ, WE NOTE THAT THE VATICAN HAS NOT BEEN VOCAL ABOUT SANCTIONS IN RECENT WEEKS, INCLUDING DURING THE POPE'S ANNUAL ADDRESS. FROM THE VATICAN PERSPECTIVE, SANCTIONS ARE ALWAYS BAD; FAR WORSE, HOWEVER, WOULD BE A MILITARY STRIKE. IF THE USG WERE TO INITIATE A BOMBING CAMPAIGN IN IRAQ, THE VATICAN WOULD MOVE FROM ITS FIRM SUPPORT OF WHAT WE HAVE DONE SO FAR IN AFGHANISTAN TO VIGOROUS AND PUBLIC OPPOSITION. END COMMENT.

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SEMBLER

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